

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Surgery no place for sales consultants and commissions**

#### **Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery (ACCS) welcomes the Australian Health Ministers' Conference focus on cosmetic surgery regulations**

ACCS President Dr Daniel Fleming said the College welcomed today's Australian Health Ministers' Conference consideration of tighter restrictions on the practice of surgeons providing undisclosed sales commissions to so-called plastic or cosmetic surgery consultants and coordinators who lack proper training or qualifications.

"The decision to have or not have any type of surgery is a very serious one, which should be undertaken carefully and with the appropriately trained surgeon, not untrained sales consultants seeking to make a sales commission," Dr Fleming warned.

The College is aware of a number of individuals, without any formal qualifications or training, providing initial consultations and referrals to prospective surgery patients, in exchange for a commission. Speaking on behalf of the College, Dr Fleming said. "Surgical referrals or consults should only be provided by qualified medical practitioners, and commissions should not be offered to influence the decision made."

Alarming stories in the UK and US media about high pressure sales tactics being used by sales commission-earning consultants to push people into having surgical cosmetic procedures has sparked concern that similar practices will be mirrored here in Australia.

In fact, the ACCS is aware of anecdotal evidence that similar practices may already be occurring in Australia and recently brought government, insurance and industry stakeholders together to discuss this issue at an ACCS hosted roundtable in March 2008. The overwhelming view expressed by participants was that this practice should be restricted and at very least properly disclosed to prospective patients.

"Unlike medical practitioners, who may face sanctions for breaching their professional and ethical duties, individuals offering such advice are not bound by any professional conduct or other authority," Dr Fleming said.

Cosmetic Surgeons, accredited by the ACCS, are not only qualified doctors bound by their code of practice, they have received training and have been assessed in the procedures they perform and how to provide appropriate counseling to prospective patients who are considering making such an important and personal decision. ACCS accredited cosmetic surgeons are required to undertake annual recertification.

The ACCS will be writing to the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Health and the Ministers of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to register its concern over these practices and request that consideration is given to restricting or banning them altogether.

# The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery



The College also welcomed the call for a consistent national approach to regulation of cosmetic surgery for those under 18 as has been introduced, for example, in Queensland and NSW where the College contributed to the formulation of the legislation. Dr Fleming said “While the College is aware of only very few such cases, it is important that proper assessment protocols are adhered to in every instance. Nationally consistent standards will advance that objective.”

Dr Fleming also said that the College was pleased that the issue of clarification of titles and qualifications used by doctors offering cosmetic surgery would be given consideration. The issue has already been discussed at the ACCS March Roundtable, where Dr Fleming noted “Consumers do not understand the meaning or significance of the different titles, memberships and qualifications. While some may mean a great deal, other memberships and grandiose titles may, in fact, mean nothing more than a paid subscription fee. In many cases, the public doesn’t have the ability to distinguish between them.”

“The College, which has been invited by the Australian Medical Council (AMC) to make a full application for the recognition of cosmetic surgery as a medical specialty, which will remove this confusion for patients, looks forward to continuing to work with Australian governments in drafting appropriate legislation and regulations in order to raise standards and protect patients,” concluded Dr Fleming.

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**Link to March 2008 ACCS Roundtable White Paper:**

<http://www.accs.org.au/pdf/ACCSRoundTableDiscussionWhitepaperMar08.pdf>

**Link to ACCS President Dr Daniel Fleming podcast:**

<http://www.accs.org.au/accs.xml>

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**The Australasian College of Cosmetic Surgery** is a multi-disciplinary body of general surgeons, plastic surgeons, dermatologists, ear nose and throat surgeons, ophthalmologists and other doctors who specialise in cosmetic surgery. The goal of the ACCS is to ensure the safe provision of cosmetic surgery and cosmetic medical procedures to the Australian community through supply of appropriately trained and certified medical practitioners.